

The Billericay School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115384
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357747
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1694
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	291
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Orr
Headteacher	Susan Hammond
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
School address	School Road Billericay, Essex CM12 9LH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 60 lessons, each taught by a different teacher. Meetings were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at a wide range of documentation and met with groups of students. The inspection team reviewed 148 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. A total of 140 student and 65 staff questionnaires were evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How much improvement has there been in standards and achievement in recent years.
- The accuracy of the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.
- The balance of provision between different subjects was analysed, as was its effect on the variations in examination outcomes.
- The inspection team evaluated impact of the vertical house system on attendance and behaviour.

Information about the school

The school is a larger than average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is a third of the national figure and so is the percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of those whose first language is not English is low. The proportion of boys and girls on roll varies annually. Ten per cent of the Year 7 intake is based on an external information and communication technology aptitude assessment.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is half the national figure, and the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is below the national figure. There are a small number of children in the school who are looked after by the local authority. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing. It has received the following national accreditations: the Quality Mark for Study Support, Microsoft Partner status, the Arts Mark Silver Award, the Healthy Schools Award, Bronze Eco Schools Status, the Creative Partnerships Change School Award, and the Quality Mark for Careers Education and Guidance.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Outcomes for individuals and groups are outstanding and have been strong for the last 3 years. Standards of attainment have improved and the proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2010 was significantly above the national average. Students' outcomes in the 'English Baccalaureate' which shows the proportion of pupils attaining 5 higher grade GCSEs including; English, mathematics, science, a foreign language and either history or geography, were positive. The impact of effective teaching, well-judged intervention strategies and the students' positive attitudes to learning has resulted in good progress. The small number of students who represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who find learning difficult make good progress. Equality of opportunity is outstanding.

Teaching is good. The use of assessment to enhance teaching and learning is outstanding. Evidence from this inspection confirms the findings of the school's robust monitoring of teaching and learning; namely that teaching is good or better in eight out of ten lessons. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are outstanding and have become real strengths of the senior staff. The partnership working with local initial teacher training institutions and other establishments has provided staff development opportunities that senior staff have managed very well. Marking is good and most pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve.

The curriculum opportunities provided are outstanding, with clear progression from GCSE to sixth-form study. The strengths evident in mathematics and computing, the school's two specialist areas, have been a significant factor in rising standards. The proportion of the 2010 Year 11 students who remained within education, employment and training was above average. The sixth form is good with a solid range of increasingly successful courses and the number of students is rising.

Inspectors found behaviour to be outstanding and they consistently observed mature well-mannered students with a positive attitude to learning. A very small number of questionnaire responses from parents and carers expressed some reservations on this matter. Those students who spoke to the inspection team were notably more positive and they commented on the the school's consistently high expectations of individual behaviour. Attendance is high and has been so for the last year.

The care, welfare and guidance provided are excellent. Parents and carers, as well as students, were full of praise for the wide range of support available. In the last three years, senior staff have successfully refined the students' academic support and looked to manage each student's examination commitments. This has helped to ensure many individuals whose circumstances make them vulnerable secure five good GCSE level passes. The school has a strong track record of nurturing such students back in to

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education. Academic guidance is a notable feature of the stronger teaching. The majority of the school's outcomes that related to the "Every Child Matters' agenda, for example, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and in supporting students to lead healthy, safe lives and make a positive contribution to the community, lead to outstanding outcomes.

Governance is good. The governing body has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. The leadership team have done outstandingly well to embed ambition and drive improvement successfully. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the leadership team has done very well to secure improvements in standards, teaching and learning, equality of provision, the sixth form, behaviour and attendance. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Explore opportunities to expand and broaden the school's curriculum offer in the light of the changing educational agenda.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students' attainment on entry to the school is average. Standards at the end of Year 11 have been above or well above the national average for the last three years. The proportion of higher grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics, at 62%, is significantly above the national figure. In the last three years the key to these positive figures has been above average outcomes in English and mathematics, as well as significantly improved outcomes in a modern foreign language. The results secured by students known to be eligible for free school meals have been significantly above the national average. The progress made by those who find learning difficult is good because of the range and quality of the help provided by the personalised learning department. Students make good progress overall.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirror the improvements shown by the most recent examination results. In the majority of lessons, students make good progress and clearly enjoy their work. The students' positive attitude to learning was a key factor in the overwhelming majority of lessons. Outcomes are stronger where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and students respond well to this challenge. In an outstanding Year 11 mathematics lesson, tasks were very well planned to match the students' learning needs; and the teacher's questioning was particularly skilful, probing the students' understanding and diagnosing students' misconceptions. Enjoyment and achievement are good overall, with strengths evident in standards, positive attitudes to learning, attendance and good behaviour.

Students and their parents and carers are very positive that students feel safe in school and inspectors observed very good staff/student relationships to support this view. The school provides effective support for a healthy lifestyle; a wide range of school meals is available, although some parents were concerned about limited dining hall space. The guidance on internet safety was seen by the students as particularly important and they viewed provision for sex and drugs education as good. The proportion of students engaged in sport is high. The students' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding with older students leading in the school house system and in organising

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charitable donations; e.g. students in the 2010 Year 11 raised £25,000 for local and national charities during their five years in the school.

The students' workplace and other skills are outstanding. Their attitudes are positive, there are high rates of attendance and punctuality, and students have strong key skills; factors regularly noted by local companies and the careers service. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The social maturity displayed by students as they move around the school is impressive and the respect for the ideas and values of their peers was evident in: excellent discussions in science on genetically modified crops; in religious education on other world religions; and in an English lesson on the human character.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall and is having a positive impact on standards and students' progress. Outstanding teaching was observed in mathematics, information and communication technology, English, science, and modern foreign languages. The strengths of teaching included: very good relationships between teachers and students; particularly skilful questioning which probed students' understanding; good use of information and communication technology; and staff's strong subject knowledge. The use

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of assessment to inform teaching and learning was a consistent strength. Students' ability to use criteria based assessment effectively was often a positive factor.

In a few lessons, the match of task to students' needs lacked precision, or there was a lack of appropriate focus provided for the students to engage orally in the lesson to show what they knew, understood and could do.

The curriculum is outstanding. Continuity between 14-19 courses is a strength and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Care, guidance and support are excellent. Pastoral care is highly valued by students, parents and carers. Academic guidance is equally strong and these two aspects of the school's work have helped significant numbers of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable make good educational progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Outstanding leadership and management, inspired by the headteacher and driven by the enthusiasm of a very strong senior leadership team have embedded ambition and driven improvement exceptionally well since the last inspection. Leadership has strength at all levels because of the outstanding partnership work the school has done to support a number of other local schools who were struggling to move forward. Under the imaginative guidance of the headteacher, a Local Leader of Education, many middle managers have refined their skills whilst helping other schools. This very positive work has been a strength of good local community cohesion, an area where strong national and European connections are a feature. As a result, staff continuity has been one of the keys to raising standards, teaching, and attendance. Senior staff were invited to accompany inspectors in the joint- observation of teaching; the views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. Equality of opportunity is outstanding because of the consistent efforts made by all staff to support students whose circumstance make them vulnerable; the curriculum offer is centred on the needs of the student, not the needs of the school, a key factor in the rise in standards.

Governance is good with a clear focus on enhancing provision at every level and an accurate view of the schools strengths and areas for development. The school's safeguarding procedures are good with staff recruitment a strength. Engagement with parents and carers is good and has recently been enhanced by providing parents and careers with web-site based access to their child's attendance, behaviour and progress records. Senior staff and the governing body deploy resources effectively and the school provides good value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Over the last four years, post-16 results show a positive trend of improvement. The match of courses provided to student need is good and high student retention rates make clear students have confidence in the quality of the provision and value the support available. The sixth form is effectively led and managed. Student numbers have risen and so has the proportion of students securing prestigious university places.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents' and carers' views of the school were overwhelmingly positive with over 90% of parents and carers happy that their child enjoys school, makes good progress and is well taught. Almost every parent and carer agreed that the school was led and managed effectively. The results of the pupil questionnaire matched that of their parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Billericay School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 148 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1694 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	38	74	58	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	36	82	64	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	57	45	65	51	5	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	45	68	53	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	30	84	66	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	24	77	60	15	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	14	92	72	14	11	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	51	40	67	52	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	35	79	62	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	18	86	67	11	9	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	21	79	62	11	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	45	35	79	62	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	48	64	50	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 January 2011

Dear Students,

Inspection of The Billericay School, Billericay, CM12 9LH

Yours is an outstanding school which it was a particular pleasure to visit recently. The excellent behaviour you displayed and the positive attitudes to learning we saw consistently were a credit to you and the school. As a result of the mature approach you bring to your education, the good teaching provided, and the outstanding range of opportunities and support available the standards you achieve are significantly above the national average. Well done!

The inspection team was impressed with every aspect of the school but we agree with the headteacher that the school needs to keep exploring new curriculum opportunities in order to continue to move forward.

I look forward to hearing about your future success.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector.

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